



Fayette County Public Library

Children's Department

Dewey's News

October 2011

Where are your books for 4th graders?

Questions about books for specific grade levels is probably one of the most common questions we get in the children's department. In the last two decades the increased use of reading programs like Accelerated Reader and Reading Counts have created a push for parents and teachers to help students find books "at their level". So you may wonder, why doesn't our library just organize the books by grade or lexile and make it easier for folks to find books according to their child's grade or score?

A child's grade level is certainly one factor to use in helping them find reading material, but there are also many other factors to consider. To focus only on grade level or "score" level is potentially detrimental to the development of lifelong reading habits. Reading is a highly personal journey that should allow the opportunity for students to make discoveries about themselves and the world around them. In other words, reading is not just an academic activity that should only be tied to grades and test scores, but is also strongly connected to a child's life, personal experiences, and aspirations.

Research has consistently shown that children who are offered print rich environments in which they get to play an active part in selecting reading material are more likely to be successful, lifelong readers. Our goal in the children's department is to make available a wide variety of interesting materials and provide tools and guidance for individual children and families in finding the books and resources that would be most enjoyable and meaningful for them.

Of course, we realize that there is a practical truth that a child's age and grade play a big part in the kind of topics and books they are interested in. So we have set up the library and created re-

sources to help you find just what you are looking for keeping in mind both grade levels and reading interests. Libraries are for exploring, and we invite you to come and explore with your child. We are here to help. Listed below are some of the main sections of the library.

Beginning Readers—These books have a more limited vocabulary and are good for children in the early stages of learning to read. Children who are just learning to read benefit from a combination of learning to read these books and having books from our picture book and chapter book sections read out loud to them.

Picture Books—These books rely on both pictures and text to tell the stories. Some of these are designed to be read out loud to young children. Others are simple enough for younger readers to tackle on their own. We have lists of great read-alouds and picture books that are good for beginning readers. It is important to note that picture books are not just for young readers. We have many picture books with challenging text and high-interest stories appropriate for 3rd, 4th and 5th graders. Ask about our list of picture books for older readers to help you get started.

Chapter Book Fiction—These are novels for children that are organized by author. Most of the readers of these books fall in 2nd–6th grades, although there are exceptions both above and below this range. We have created a lot of lists to help guide you in this area. Some are by interest area as in mysteries, sports fiction, animals stories, etc. Others are by grade level. Just keep in mind that for the grade level lists you will want to take a look at the lists just above and below their grade as most of these books are appropriate for many grades.

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Chapter Book Nonfiction—These books are organized by subject according to Dewey Decimal numbers. If your child has some favorite subject areas, learn those numbers as any public library you go to will have books about that subject in the same number. Most of these books are in the 2nd–6th grade range but we do have quite a few that are also appropriate for use with children in Pre-K—first grade. For some children non-fiction is their main entry into reading as they enjoy finding books about their favorite sports team, animal, race car, etc.

Other important things to remember:

Reading out loud to children should not end once they become proficient readers. Reading to children throughout their life is highly beneficial because it creates a wonderful time of bonding, and also helps increase comprehension and knowledge.

Use book levels sparingly, focusing more on interests and past reading experiences. If you are worried that a book might be too challenging, use the five finger rule. Have your child read the first page of the book and count how many words they don't know. If there are more than five, then the book may be too challenging. However, if they are highly motivated to read the book have them try another page or two to be sure.